



The Insider

www.senate.michigan.gov/switalski

Inside State Politics with State Senator Mickey Switalski Senate District 10

September 12, 2008

Welcome to the electronic version of *The Insider*. I would like to take the opportunity to thank you for your support and giving me an opportunity to represent you in the Michigan Senate. It is my sincere hope that this bi-weekly e-newsletter will keep you informed of the happenings in Lansing while staying true to the traditional style of *The Insider*. If you would like to contact me, please feel free to e-mail me at senmswitalski@senate.michigan.gov or call me at my Roseville or Lansing office. You can also meet me in person during my constituent hours, coming to a location near you. Call my office and make an appointment or just walk in. See schedule for details.

Mickey's Blog: The Rise and Fall of Kwame Kilpatrick

Unlike the vast majority of people who pass sweeping judgments on him, I actually know Kwame Kilpatrick. I served in the House with him for three years before he was elected Mayor of Detroit.

He is a complex person with many strengths and some tragic weaknesses. His Rise and Fall is a sad but all too familiar story in politics.

I first met Kwame Kilpatrick back in 1998. I had just won the Democratic Primary for an open State House seat. He called me because he was interested in running for Floor Leader, the number 2 ranking position among House Democrats. I suggested he meet me at St. Angela School in Roseville, where I would be picking up my son Liam from kindergarten.

I figured if he wanted to meet me, I would take the opportunity to show him where I come from and what I valued.

A natural politician, Kwame and Liam became fast friends. Although I didn't vote for him that first time, Kwame impressed me as a man of significant abilities who knew his way around the street. And in the greatest fiasco I've ever witnessed in politics, he won Floor Leader by one vote.

This was my welcome to Lansing. The 52 House Democrats met in the Capitol two days after the November Election of 1998. We had just lost the Majority in the House, and held a secret ballot for the 2 Minority Leadership positions.

Mike Hanley was elected Leader on the first ballot. After casting our votes for Floor Leader, a delegation of 3 members, including the chairman of the caucus, went into an adjoining room to count the ballots. When they returned, the Caucus Chair declared Buzz Thomas the winner. Members leapt to their feet, clapping, cheering, pounding Buzz on the back and offering Kwame condolences.

I watched as Kwame, devastated, shook hands with Buzz.

Suddenly one member of the troika shouted, *“Wait! It’s not Right!”*

A hush fell over the room.

“What do you mean?” Leader Hanley asked.

“Its...that’s not what the result was!”

You could have heard a pin drop. The Caucus was stunned. The delegation was ordered to go back to the room and recount the votes. They did and returned to report that Kwame had won by a single vote. I can’t imagine what it was like for the two of them, especially Buzz. He went from winner to loser, from elation to despair, in two minutes.

I thought the experience would teach Kwame a lifelong lesson in humility, having straddled the narrow line between winner and loser.

I guess it didn’t.

Remember that I had just been elected two days before, and this was my first exposure to the Legislature. It was easily the worst meeting I’ve ever attended. To top it off, we re-elected the Caucus Chair by acclamation. That was like giving a “Good Government” award to the Florida Secretary of State for the 2000 Election.

I realized that first day I had entered an insane asylum. Two years later, I challenged the Caucus Chair and defeated him. When you screw up that badly, there has to be consequences.

I watched Kwame in the job for those two years. Looking back, it was by far the worst session in my ten years in the Michigan Legislature. House Republican Speaker Chuck Perricone and Democratic Leader Hanley were sworn enemies and relations in the Chamber were awful. We made some historic blunders in policy, including unsupportable tax cuts that resulted in eight years of deficits, and a Detroit School takeover that turned into a five-year fiasco. We liquidated the Rainy Day Fund and the State plunged into debt.

Yet amid the chaos, Kwame demonstrated an ability to work with Republicans. His room for maneuver was limited, because he was only second in command. But he was one of the few Democrats able to shape policy rather than just oppose things.

When Hanley left thru term limits, Kwame came to see me again in 2000 about the Leadership race, this time at my district office in the Roseville Theatre Building. I backed him early and he appointed me to Appropriations, the most powerful and bi-partisan Committee in the Legislature.

In the eight years since, I have risen to the top Democrat position, Minority Vice-Chair. In terms of my effectiveness, I regard this appointment as the key event in my legislative career.

Archer was still Mayor at the time, and Kwame’s critics charged he was using Leadership as a stepping stone to launch a Mayoral race. I quizzed him on this. He claimed he had no plans to run and besides, Archer would be nearly impossible to beat. Though I had no knowledge of what was to happen, and was just guessing, I asked him what he would do if Archer didn’t run.

He stopped for a second and peered at me through his narrowed eyelids.

“I’d have to take a look at that,” he admitted quietly.

“I’d be disappointed in you if you didn’t,” I replied. I value ambition in a leader.

Kwame did an outstanding job as Minority Leader in the House. He set the tone immediately at our Caucus retreat. The House Republicans had elected a new Speaker, Rick Johnson, who was a collegial person and not a fire-eating partisan like Perricone.

“Things are going to be different this term,” Kwame announced. “It’s not all about gaining the Majority. You didn’t come here to *get the Republicans*. You came here to *help your constituents*. From now on we won’t judge everything in terms of winning the next election. Let’s focus on doing good policy for the people we serve.”

I can’t stress enough to you how revolutionary this was. Kwame completely changed our orientation with these words. It was one of the most significant things anyone ever said to me about how to properly do my job.

For me, that was the high point of Kwame’s career.

He later won a couple of tough races for Mayor, and he did some good things to spur development in the City. But his accomplishments were dwarfed by some terrible abuses. Kwame is a big man with big appetites. And his desires got the better of him. I think he was too young at age 30 to realize he couldn’t do as he pleased. You can get away with a lot if you are one of 110 Reps, 100 miles from home, in Lansing. You get away with nothing when you are the Mayor of Detroit. Kwame never seemed to understand this. He has no one to blame but himself.

He had too much power too early. He indulged his prodigious appetites and lacked the maturity and judgment to control his desires and became corrupt.

Were these faults always there? I suppose they were. But how could a man who saw public service with such clarity in 2000 become so blind and ethically lost just a few years later? It is a sad tale, both for him and for the City. Unlike many people I know, who seemed to relish in his failure, I took no joy in watching him self-destruct. It was an awful waste of talent and opportunity. It was a tragedy for the City and the Region.

I pray his successors will not let power lead them into temptation, and so avoid a similar fate.

Mickey’s Letter Bag: Smoking Ban

Dear Senator,

I know you’ll get a ton of responses to your request for input on a proposed smoking ban, so I’ll be brief. I see two classes of argument here:

Economic arguments

While studies of the effects of “No Smoking” laws on business can be found to support either view, it appears to this surfer that the preponderance of results show the impact to be from modestly negative to vastly improved. In New York City, for instance, a poll of 30,000 people said by a margin of 6 to 1 they eat out more often following the ban. Others studies, though fewer in number, indicate the opposite, and of course opponents of any ban will cite them. In Ireland, 440 fewer pubs were re-licensed

following the ban, but these were essentially in the remote west and relied heavily on local patronage. In population centers, business improved substantially.

Emotional Arguments

Restaurant owners, hammered by the economy in Michigan, are afraid to alienate the approximately 25% of us who smoke. As a practical matter, then, I have no place to go if I want to dine out without suffering the effects of smoke. Yet in a stunning stroke of disingenuousness, smokers say we non-smokers should “vote with their feet” and eat elsewhere.

Conclusion

The Republicans have this one just about right, even if they themselves are disingenuous.

Mike Gavin
Clinton Twp.

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Mickey:

I think you know my position on a smoking ban in restaurants, after discussing it with you for the past 4-5 years... I know you are a proponent of the free enterprise system (i.e. free market) but this issue goes far beyond that. What about the workers in these establishments that have to contend with smoke most of their work day! Do they count or does the market system take precedence? The argument about going elsewhere if you don't like the smoke just doesn't wash! That is not always an option when every restaurant allows smoking!

Do you remember when smoking was allowed on airline flights? It was eventually banned because the airline flight attendants union forced the airlines (and FAA) to ban it or suffer expensive litigation. Unfortunately, restaurant workers do not have a strong union to support them.

Most restaurants would like to ban smoking but they feel that some of their customers could go elsewhere. I don't think that most customers go to a restaurant just because they can smoke there. There are many other places that they can smoke! They are there primarily to eat a meal. I know of many restaurants that have finally banned smoking and actually increased their business due to more non-smokers (who did not like the smoke) coming back. After all, there are more non-smokers than smokers!

Do the smoking rights of one person (that's all it takes) in a restaurant out-weigh the rights of the other non-smoking patrons? I think that if a person can't stop smoking for the relatively short time they are at a restaurant then, they have a big problem and should be looking at their expensive habit. A pack of cigarettes today costs more than our (\$4.00) per gallon gasoline. Their habit is controlling them!

How to accommodate the House and Senate versions: Consider allowing smoking in bars, casinos, bingo halls, and (even restaurants) if, they have a truly isolated smoking area where non-smokers (and smoke) can not interact with the non-smokers. If these establishments believe that the costs of allowing patrons to smoke is too expensive (smoking areas with ventilation), then they would always have the option of banning smoking (at no cost). But ban smoking in restaurants! I personally don't like the taste of cigarette smoke in my food! There will be NO economic issues when ALL restaurants ban smoking: people will not stop eating because they can not longer smoke!

We need to look past the economic argument of banning smoking; this is a health issue! The other 33 states that have banned smoking have the right idea and it is time that Michigan joined them.

Ed Debler
Sterling Heights

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I am a smoker. I usually confine it to my home and/or establishments that provide a separate location for their clients. I just don't patronize businesses that do not have a smoking "section".

However, if everyone in Michigan quits smoking, who/how/what will make up the exorbitant taxes Michigan is currently collecting on each pack of cigarettes?

Sue Westlake
Clinton Township

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I am emailing in response to the ban on smoking that you brought up in your most recent E-newsletter. I must agree with the statement that by banning smoking in all public places would put a damper on businesses already hurting. I am a non-smoker myself but I understand that smokers would rather not go to an establishment that has a ban on smoking. They would rather go somewhere else or stay home and that is their choice. I think that it should be up to the business owner to make the decision on whether or not to ban smoking and that in turn gives the smokers/non-smokers the choice to go somewhere else that will provide the atmosphere in which they are looking to enjoy themselves. That is just my opinion.

Thanks for listening
Kelly
Roseville

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Mickey,
Approval of the proposed Smoking Ban throughout the State would set an ominous precedent. Tobacco is a legal crop, and smoking materials (cigars, cigarettes, pipes, etc.) are legal products.

If the government wants to rid society of these things they should outlaw tobacco. Obviously, with the influence of the tobacco lobby, the tax income they're getting, and the millions of dollars the Federal Government spends marketing our tobacco products around the world, this will never happen.

If the Michigan Government decides to ban these products in the interest of 'public safety', what will be next? Will they ban alcohol? (They tried that a while ago and Prohibition failed miserably!) Will they ban Big Mac's and other fast-food 'cholesterol bombs'? Will they close all beaches to prevent skin cancer? Where will it stop?

I suggest the Smoking Ban be sent to defeat now, to avoid setting the precedent for future intrusions by the government into our personal life.

Regards,
Bruce
Shelby Township

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Hi Mickey,
Because of the ill effects of smoking and second-hand smoking, I think you should do all you can to ban it period.

I have heard that a party store in Roseville has open cigarettes for kids to purchase for \$1.00 each. A lady saw two kids steal a couple of them and she told the owner and he said the cigarette sales person encourages him to let them because then they become addicted.

Barbara Miglio
Roseville

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Mr. Switalski,

I had the opportunity to spend time in California and Texas and, as you know, both States banned smoking in restaurants. I went to good restaurants, medium restaurants, sports bars, they were always full, and if people there felt like smoking they would go outside smoke and return to their table after they were done.

Every place I went smelled clean and it was so nice to breathe smoke-free air. So, I think the non-smoking ban law should go back on the docket for approval.

Thanks,
Roland
Clinton Township

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I would very much like to see a complete ban of smoking in public enclosed areas. I returned from a trip to California last month and the no-smoking policy did not seem to at all hamper the lounges and restaurants there.

This is not a matter of personal freedom, it is however, a matter of polluting someone else's breathing space. It is especially noxious around here where places have no-smoking areas and people will get up together between courses to stand next to me at the bar to do some competitive puffing to hurry back to their area for their next course.

And really....*a no-smoking area that is not completely closed off from the rest of the establishment is akin to having a no- peeing section of a swimming pool.*

Mark Jarosz
Sterling Heights

Thanks to everyone who responded. All of your comments were wonderful. Keep them coming.
Mickey

Mickey's Notes and Updates

STATE BUDGET AIMS TO RAISE MICHIGAN GRADUATION PERCENTAGE

The Michigan Center for Educational Performance and Information recently reported that Michigan's 2007 high school graduation rate was calculated at 75 percent. In order for Michigan to have an educated, quality workforce it's essential that we raise this number and focus our efforts on keeping students in the classroom. The recently passed School Aid budget addresses just that by including \$15 million to be used specifically to reduce dropouts within districts with less than a 70% graduation rate. This increase will help school districts across the state ensure students graduate with the education needed to succeed in the global economy.

MICHIGAN PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION APPROVES \$12.5 MILLION IN MICHIGAN ENERGY EFFICIENCY GRANTS

The Michigan Public Service Commission (MPSC) recently approved \$12,499,757 in Michigan energy efficiency grants for all customer classes to 16 organizations for the fiscal year beginning October 1. These grants will help the state promote and advance the development of energy efficient technologies in Michigan. The Commission issued a request for proposals for Michigan energy efficiency grants for all customer classes with three distinct focuses: energy efficient technology programs, compact fluorescent lamp (CFL) programs, and green community programs.

Renewable energy is a large focus in Michigan's recently debated energy legislation, which still awaits a compromise. More than twenty other states have passed similar legislation with strong renewable portfolio standards and are enjoying the effects through new jobs and businesses.

ECONOMIC STIMULUS FUNDS STILL AVAILABLE

If you received at least \$3,000 in Social Security, Veterans benefits or Tier I Railroad Retirement benefits in 2007 and have not yet filed a tax return, you have until October 15th to file your return so that you can become eligible to receive an economic stimulus payment of up to \$300 from the federal government. Staff from the Internal Revenue Service and U.S. Senator Debbie Stabenow's office will assist you in filling out IRS Form 1040A.

What to bring:

- * A copy of your SSA 1099, RRB 1099, or VA Benefits Earnings Statement
- * Photo identification
- * Bank account information (cancelled check or check book)
- * Unaddressed stamped envelope
- * If you are filing on behalf of another tax payer, proof of Power of Attorney is required.
- * If the person for whom you are filing is deceased, please provide the death certificate from 2007 or 2008.

For more information contact Senator Stabenow's office at 313-961-4330.

MICHIGAN TOBACCO QUITLINE SUPPLIES AVAILABLE

The Michigan Tobacco Quitline is giving away nicotine-containing products in exchange for individuals agreeing to enter a free counseling program for would-be quitters. According to the Michigan Department of Community Health, there are enough supplies of nicotine patches, gums and lozenges for about 1,500 people to receive up to eight weeks worth.

To get the quit kit for free, people must call the 24-hour 1-800-QUIT-NOW hotline and agree to a cessation program where a personal coach develops a quit plan and is available for up to five follow up sessions. The deadline to receive a free kit is September 30, 2008.

Coffee Hours

In response to requests from constituents, I have added coffee hours in Roseville and during the daytime. Here are my next scheduled coffee hours. Please feel to stop on by or make an appointment by calling my office.

September 29, 2008 1:30-2:30 p.m.	October 30, 2008 7-8 p.m.
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Location: Biggby Coffee (26740 Gratiot, south of I-696) Roseville	Location: Clinton-Macomb Public Library (35891 South Gratiot) Clinton Township
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Mickey's TV Insider Show

Check out my TV Insider Show coming to a television station near you. Watch me interview local guests about politics, life, issues and concerns to our district.

Sterling Heights

Every Saturday and Sunday at 1 p.m.
(Comcast Channel 5/WOW Channel 10)

Utica

Every Wednesday at 9 a.m.
(Comcast Channel 5/WOW Channel 10)

Clinton Township

Last week of every month- Sat thru Thurs
(Comcast Channel 5/WOW Channel 10)

Roseville

Various Times-check local listings
(Comcast Channel 18/WOW Channel 10)

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